Ritalin (also known as Ritalin LA, Ritalin SR, methylphenidate) is a stimulant or “upper”. It is used to treat attention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and narcolepsy (which is a sleep disorder). The use of Ritalin for these problems should be under the direct supervision of a physician.

So how does it work?
It blocks the reuptake of dopamine and norepinephrine (chemicals produced by the body), especially in the central nervous system. It can also cause these substances to become elevated in the body as well. Use of Ritalin may result in exhilaration/euphoria initially, increased energy and increased alertness along with increased heart rate, increased blood pressure and irregular heart beats. Withdrawal may result in excessive fatigue, depression and sleep disturbances.

Short term effects of taking Ritalin

Judgment
- Use could result in euphoria, nervousness, restlessness, inability to sleep, paranoia and hostility which may impair judgment.
- Use of this agent may result in drug dependence and/or addiction.

Memory
Use could result in euphoria, nervousness, restlessness, inability to sleep and paranoia which may impair memory. It is believed that use of Ritalin increases alertness which could improve memory. However, the adverse effects and the effects of the drug wearing off could actually impair memory.

Health
- Use of this agent may result in drug dependence and/or addiction.
- Use may cause decreased appetite and weight loss.
- In addition, it could result in increased heart rate, increased blood pressure, and irregular heart beats. Abuse of Ritalin could result in serious problems, such as heart attack, stroke and even death.
- Use has also been associated with seizures.
- Use of Ritalin may result in sudden death.

Long term effects of taking Ritalin

Judgment
Use could result in nervousness, restlessness, inability to sleep, paranoia and compulsive use which may impair judgment.

Memory
Use could result in nervousness, restlessness, inability to sleep, paranoia and compulsive use which may impair memory.

Health
- Use of this agent may result in drug dependence and/or addiction.
- Use may increase body temperatures which can be very dangerous and result in hospitalization or sudden death.
- In addition, it could result in increased heart rate, increased blood pressure, and irregular heart beats. Ritalin may cause serious cardiovascular problems, such as heart attack or stroke, and could result in death or serious problems that would decrease quality of life from these problems.
- Long term use has been associated with numerous psychiatric disorders, such as paranoia, depression, compulsive behaviors of use, etc. The psychiatric disorders may not resolve even after discontinuation of Ritalin.
- Use could result in sudden death.

For more information contact the Student Health Center at 348.3878

References